

Oregon House of Representatives
House Committee on Business and Labor
Hearing on HB 2998
March 13, 2019

Honorable Chair Barker, Vice Chair Barreto, Vice Chair Bynum and Members of the House Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of House Bill 2998, which would remove the English language only requirement for documents related to business organizations that are submitted for filing to the Secretary of State, as well as requiring that mandatory documents related to business filing are available in the 10 most common languages in Oregon. This requirement has created barriers and diminished opportunities for entrepreneurs with Limited-English-Proficiency.

The requirement that documents related to business filing be solely in English is exclusionary—it sends the message that people who don't have a high proficiency in English don't deserve to make a life or build prosperity for themselves and their children themselves in this beautiful state. Further, excluding them from starting business hurts Oregon, as well—what good are we doing ourselves by limiting certain peoples' ability to innovate, create new jobs, and add to the creative and diverse portfolio of small businesses that make Oregon unique? The truth is, limiting someone's participation based on their proficiency in English isn't the sort of policy that was ever intended to do good for our state. I can only assume that this regulation's original intent was racist and exclusionary. When we choose inclusivity, we make Oregon a better state.

Increased accessibility in the filing process will lead to the establishment of more small businesses in Oregon, leading to more tax revenue and employment. Based on estimates given to us by the Secretary of State Staff, the translation of filing forms could provide an addition of over 17,000 businesses per biennium. The Small Business Administration has found that the average minority owned business in Oregon hires seven employees. According to the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, in the state of Oregon, there are over 225,000 individuals with Limited English Proficiency. They all deserve access to entrepreneurship and financial opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lauren Johnson
Citizen, Corvallis

